

Sinclair Broadcasting's decision to force their stations to air an anti-Kerry documentary days before the election is a clear example of the dangers of media consolidation.

Sinclair uses the public airwaves free of charge, and is obligated by law to serve the public interest. But when large companies control the airwaves, we get more of what's good for the bottom line and less of what we need for our democracy. Instead of something produced at "News Central" far away, it's more important that we see real people from our own communities and more substantive news about issues that matter.

Sinclair's actions show why we need to strengthen media ownership rules, not weaken them. They show why the license renewal process needs to involve more than a returned postcard.

In addition the FCC should pull Fox's license or at least prevent Fox from calling itself a News station when in reality it is an opinion station. There should be a LEGAL DISTINCTION between news and opinion, otherwise a great disservice is being done to Americans who are looking for fair and balanced news. Unfortunately, as evidenced (see PIPA Report) by the misperception of facts about discovery of WMDs in Iraq, especially by FOX viewers, a majority of Americans cannot for themselves differentiate between factual news and someone's opinion being offered as news. This is a very serious problem as it shapes people's perceptions and beliefs before the election.